

Can I exchange this?

10.21.18

Message 38

Mark Series

The Way of the Cross

³⁴ Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

9 And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

1. When I go shopping, there are two things I hate doing.

A. The two things I hate doing are:

1. Try on clothes,
2. Exchange something.
3. Both of these actions are painful to me.

a. I would rather buy a pair of pants that don't fit and let them go to waste in my closet than to either try them on or exchange them.

b. I don't know if you ladies have this problem but many of the men here can sympathize.

B. I hate exchanging clothes for several reasons:

1. First, it is a public profession that I messed up.
 - a. Walmart is the worst.
 - b. You walk into Walmart with you exchange and the greeter has to check your receipt. (And I can feel their judging eyes).
 - c. Then I walk up to the service desk "I want to exchange this for a different size..."
 1. They may not say it but I know what they are thinking...
 2. You've gained some weight, haven't you?
 - d. This is one reason why men would rather not exchange something.

2. Second, to exchange means that something along the way has changed.

- a. I'm a weird creature.
- b. I have invested the last 8 years of my life leading a church through change.
- c. But I don't want things to change:
 1. I don't want menus at restaurants to change.
 2. I like dealing with the same people at businesses or organizations.
 3. And I like to be able to always buy the same pair of pants and to NEVER have to change sizes.

C. **Why am I talking about this?** The reason why many people, especially men, struggle with following Jesus is that Jesus demands an exchange.

1. To follow Jesus, we must exchange our life for his.
2. To follow Jesus, we must exchange our version of the gospel for His.

a. Our gospel says we can save ourselves or, better yet, we aren't in need of salvation.

b. Jesus' Gospel said our current life is destined for destruction but Jesus will give His life for ours.

3. To follow Jesus, we must exchange our world for His.

D. This morning's passage is going to challenge us by showing us Jesus' call to a radical discipleship.

1. A discipleship that calls into question everything that is comfortable and normal.

2. But the call to follow Jesus is the most exciting journey we can ever experience.

3. **Let's talk about that journey for a few moments today.**

2. To follow Jesus is a conscious choice.

A. Jesus said, "Whoever wants to follow me..."

1. To follow Jesus is a choice.

2. No one can force you or make you be a disciple.

3. You choose to follow Jesus.

B. **The life of a disciple is a life of conscious choice.**

1. To read your Bible is a conscious choice.

2. To go to church is a conscious choice.

3. To worship is a conscious choice.

a. Illustrate: Have you ever been to church and you don't feel like worshipping?

b. You don't want to sing, you don't want to stand, you just don't want to.

c. Guess what, no one can make you!

d. But there is a blessing that happens when you worship even when you don't feel like it.

C. **You can't follow Jesus by accident.**

1. You are never going to look up someday and notice you have accidentally been following Jesus.

2. I had to choose to follow Jesus.

a. And on the hard days, the stressful days, the dark days, I have to determine again to follow Jesus.

b. That's because our natural inclination is away from God and towards our self.

c. But the call of Jesus is away from self and toward God.

3. That brings us to Jesus' next point:

3. After we choose to follow Jesus, we must first deny ourselves.

A. I HATE denying myself

1. I am my favorite person.

2. I love...

a. Feeding myself.

b. Listening to the voice in my head.

c. Making myself look good.

3. I hate...

a. Skipping meals.

b. Disciplining myself through exercise.

c. Telling my flesh no.

B. Jesus knows this struggle.

1. That is why the call of discipleship features a denial of our self.

2. What is involved is more than denying ourselves in food, pleasures of the flesh, or engaging in exercise.

3. To deny ourselves is to put God FIRST in our lives in every area.

4. To deny ourselves is put our desires and priorities in the background of God's picture.

a. I want to show you two famous portraits.

b. What do you notice about these portraits?

c. There is nothing in the background that takes away from the main focus (the person in the portrait).

d. To deny ourselves is to consciously put Jesus in the foreground and ourselves in the background.

5. How many of you have ever ate at a fancy restaurant?

a. The best waiters and waitresses not only keep your class full and your table clean of dirty dishes but the best stay unnoticed and in the background.

b. The dinner isn't about them, the conversation at the table isn't theirs, their job is to facilitate whatever the purpose of the dinner is.

1. Julie and I are very patient at restaurants.

2. But a few years ago, we had dressed up and went to Red Lobster for an anniversary dinner.

3. From the beginning, the restaurant staff made the meal about them and not us.

4. They put us at on a really long bench seat with a huge family and all of their kids.

5. When we asked to change to a different table, they made us feel like we were bothering them and upsetting their plans.

6. But the goal of a good restaurant experience is to facilitate the plans and desires of the patrons.

6. The goal of discipleship is to put the desire and plans of Jesus above our own.

a. The moment I put on the uniform of a disciple of Jesus, it no longer became about me but about Him.

b. My life became no longer about my business, but His.

4. It isn't enough to deny ourselves, but we must also carry our Cross.

A. I have heard it said that the idea of taking up a cross would be like us thinking about the electric chair or hanging.

1. But this doesn't do it justice.

2. I have never seen someone hanged or executed but the people in that crowd had.

B. The Jews of Jesus' day were acquainted with the terror of a Roman cross.

1. They had smelled the rotting corpses of those killed by the Romans.

2. Maybe they had loved ones or knew of those who had been executed and, perhaps, even crucified.

3. Many in that crowd would, themselves, experience great pain and torment for the cause of Christ maybe involving their own, physical, cross.

a. History tells us that both Peter and Andrew were crucified.

b. Peter was crucified upside down and Andrew was crucified on a cross built in the shape of an X.

C. Jesus could not have picked a more scandalous or violent symbol of what it means to follow Him.

1. Many people enter into a relationship with Jesus with the idea of trading their life of pain and trouble for a life of carefree living.
2. And **life with Jesus is infinitely better than life without Him.**
 - a. But this was not the terms of discipleship that Jesus used.
 - b. Jesus said that whoever wanted to follow Him would have to deny themselves and pick up their own cross.
3. I've heard it illustrated that while we all have our own cross to bear, that each of our crosses is different.
 - a. Some have said that some people have big crosses, others have small crosses, but the importance is that we all have a cross.
 - b. But this isn't what Jesus is saying and this is not how His audience would have heard this.
 - c. The Romans used crosses to crucify men, women, and their children.
 - d. **There are NO easy crosses to die upon.**
 - e. **Our culture has domesticated the cross of Jesus.**

5. To follow Jesus, we must be willing to exchange our life for his.

³⁵ For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶ What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷ Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?

A. With this, Jesus prepares His disciples for their future.

1. Jesus knew that He was going to die.
2. But Jesus also knew that his disciples would die for Him too.
3. History tells us that Peter, Simon, Jude, Philip, and Andrew were all crucified for Jesus.

4. John is the only one believed to have died a natural death, but not for lack of trying on behalf of those who hated him.

B. Jesus was speaking to a group of guys who would, indeed, be called upon to die for Him.

1. Many of us here will not be called upon to die for Jesus.

2. We may experience some discomfort but full-fledged persecution is foreign for us here.

3. But that doesn't change what Jesus is teaching here.

4. The call to follow Jesus is an exchange: Our life for His.

5. But this is not an uneven deal.

C. When we exchange our life for Jesus', we reap the rewards.

1. On our current path, we are going to lose it all.

2. Jesus said that it is better to lose our life than to lose our soul.

a. What is it that really defines who we are?

1. Is it our life, and the things we do?

2. Or is it our soul, the place where we think, feel, dream, hope, fear, and believe?

b. I submit to you that what we do, our life so to speak means nothing without our soul.

1. There is a term in our world called, "soul-sucking".

2. It refers to anything we do that takes the joy and hope out of something.

a. A lot of people say their jobs are "soul-sucking".

b. Meaning what they are doing is taking the enjoyment of life out of them.

3. This loss of soul is what eternity will be without Jesus.

a. Hell and eternal death consist of far more than physical pain.

b. It also includes the loss of personhood, the loss of soul, the loss of identity.

c. In hell, Our soul (the place of our mind, will, and emotions) will be cast out of the presence of God never to be redeemed.

4. Jesus said that the reward of following Him will be to keep our soul.

a. As I was in my office studying this, I was trying to picture this.

1. Here I am, a disciple of Jesus, and I have given him my life and my soul.

2. I have given Him everything that makes me a person:

a. Not just what I do,

b. But also what I think and feel.

b. I give this to Jesus and I was wondering what does Jesus want with it?

1. Because I know me.

2. What I do is not impressive.

3. What I think and feel is even less impressive.

4. What does Jesus want with me?

c. The answer? He wants to redeem it.

1. He wants to give value to what I have devalued.

2. He wants to restore dignity to something that sin has degraded.

3. He wants to give to someone who has no other hope.
4. He wants to take a common thing, me, and make it holy.
5. And in this way, I am infinitely better off by giving my life to Jesus than to keep it myself.
 - a. Because Jesus can do in a moment that I cannot do in a lifetime.
 - b. And when I work for Jesus, my life is no longer defined by those around me but by the one for whom I work for.

Application

A. Some of you today are struggling with identity.

1. Your identity is being determined by life factors:

- a. How much money you make (or don't make).
- b. Your kids are your identity.
- c. You are searching for identity in your sexuality, your political affiliation, or a myriad of other voices.

2. You are desperately searching for an identity that will not only stick but accurately define who you are, but you are failing.

- a. Have you ever considered that the reason why you can't find your true identity and purpose is that you were designed to give those questions to God?
- b. Jesus said if you want to find your true life, you have to lose it for His sake!
- c. Not for your sake, your families' sake, or for anything else but for Jesus' sake!
- d. Are you ready to let Jesus be the defining figure in your life?

B. The morning some of you have been hearing the voice of God.

1. You can't put your finger on it, but you feel that Jesus has been calling you to follow Him in a deeper way!
2. Maybe it started at our missions convention or it is has been a number of conversations over the last few weeks.
3. It seems that a theme keeps popping up and you can't shake it.
4. Have you considered the thought that Jesus is defining for you what it means for you to follow Him?

C. This morning, I want our prayer time to be focused on this theme.

1. The theme is Jesus' calling us to radical discipleship.
2. That we will all reach a place in our lives where we are defined by our relationship with Jesus and not our relationship with anything else.
3. This morning, Jesus is calling us to exchange this life for His!
4. Let's pray.